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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 001919

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH WAZIRISTAN AGREEMENT: GOP BEGINNING
PIECEMEAL IMPLEMENTATION

REF: A. PESHAWAR 330
[B](#). ISLAMABAD 1586
[C](#). PESHAWAR 118

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Interior Minister Rehman Malik briefed Ambassador on the May 20 jirga with Mehsud tribal leaders. Malik said the GOP would likely sign the peace agreement "after a while." It appears the GOP has begun piecemeal implementation of the agreement. Malik outlined the GOP's negotiating package, saying the government planned to provide housing and humanitarian assistance, re-open blockaded roads and release some "low-level" detainees. While some military redeployment out of Mehsud areas was taking place, Malik said the Army would not fully withdraw until police and law enforcement were in place. Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Governor Owais Ghani briefed Consulate Peshawar's Principle Officer on the jirga as well. Ghani said he had stressed to the Mehsud elders that while the GOP was willing to assist, local tribesmen must take responsibility for controlling their territory and deny access to militants and foreign terrorists. The central government has the lead in talks with militants and has largely shut local civilian officials out of the process, including information sharing and consultations. These local officials are concerned the government may be repeating mistakes made in developing the flawed 2006 North Waziristan agreement. END SUMMARY.

MOI Malik Discusses May 20 Jirga on Agreement

[1](#)2. (C) Interior Minister Malik briefed Ambassador evening of May 20 on the jirga hosted that day by him and NWFP Governor Ghani and attended by 48 Mehsud tribal elders. Describing the jirga as a "great success," Malik said the government had agreed to send in flour, blankets, and some construction materials for those displaced by fighting. Additionally, the GOP will provide compensation for some destroyed houses. Regarding the government's plan to release some "low-level" detainees, Malik said he would soon give us a list of those detainees prior to their release. The GOP has also moved to re-open roads - one of the Mehsuds' chief demands.

[1](#)3. (C) Malik said the GOP expected to sign an agreement "after a while," but first wanted to see how the initial implementation went. He also stressed that, while there has been some redeployment from Mehsud areas, the Army will not completely withdraw until police and law enforcement are in place.

14. (C) Malik also noted there was substantial sympathy for expelling "foreigners" because the tribesmen view them as disruptive. He said he stressed the importance of tribal leaders putting a stop to cross border attacks. The tribal leaders asked Malik why he was taking "direction from the U.S." He replied that the War on Terror is the subject of UN resolutions and, therefore, subject to the will of the international community. Malik indicated this argument has resonance here.

NWFP Governor: Tribesmen "Must Take Responsibility"

15. (C) Governor Owais Ghani briefed Principal Officer Lynne Tracy, Consulate Peshawar, on the May 20 jirga, which he described as a "frank exchange." Ghani confirmed tribal leaders had asked for the GOP's help in re-establishing communities hit hard by the military blockade. Ghani said he stressed to the Mehsud elders that while the GOP was willing to assist, they must take responsibility for controlling their territory and deny access to militants and foreign terrorists. Ghani noted roads had re-opened, enabling many of the approximately 200,000 Mehsuds displaced by army operations to return home and escape the increasingly high temperatures in the Dera Ismail Khan district where they have been living in tents.

Prisoner Release

16. (C) Ghani said some detainees have been released in two or
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three "batches." These were, he noted, Mehsuds who had been picked up by the military after the January siege of Ladha Fort as a part of tribal collective responsibility. (Note: Contacts in Dera Ismail Khan told Consulate Peshawar on May 15 that they had observed prisoners "released" and then transported using an airport in D.I. Khan. According to Altaf Mehsud, a South Waziristan-based Mehsud elder, "some prisoners have been exchanged already and others will change hands soon." Mehsud said that a group of prisoners had reached Razmak on the North/South Waziristan border and would soon be exchanged. End Note.)

17. (C) Both Malik and Ghani insisted the release of Pakistan Ambassador Tariq Azizuddin had not been part of this deal or connected to a prisoner "swap." There had been a demand, said Ghani, to release 12 individuals (NFI), but the GOP negotiated that demand down to one individual who was kept in custody with the offer of a legal review of the case.

Troop Redeployment

18. (C) Major General Tariq Khan publicly commented May 18 that "we are not moving out, and are only re-adjusting our positions" to provide space for the implementation of the peace accord. Contacts based in Wana say they witnessed significant troop movements. Selaab Mehsud, a Wana-based Mehsud elder, told Consulate Peshawar May 20 that he observed a significant departure of troops from the Mehsud areas of Spinkay Raghdai (located between Jandola and Sakwekai). Local press reports on May 18 described Spinkay as a "ghost town."

Negotiations -- The Provincial Role

19. (C) The Governor is the only provincial level leader involved in the negotiations and confirmed that the Awami National Party (ANP)-led NWFP government is not participating in these talks. Governor Ghani noted the ANP has no jurisdiction in South Waziristan, but that he is regularly briefing them on developments.

¶10. (C) On May 20, Islam Zeb, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Secretariat's Deputy Secretary for Law and Order, told Consulate Peshawar the Secretariat has "been left out of the talks" in South Waziristan. Zeb, who has been an Assistant Political Agent in South Waziristan, said the "political government" has taken the lead in negotiations with militants. He added that he was "unaware" of the terms of the agreement and expressed frustration that the FATA's civilian administration had been left out of talks.

Potential Fall Out From the Deal

¶11. (C) Islam Zeb expressed concern over the impact of the peace talks in South Waziristan and that the Political Agent would be left to "implement whatever the government negotiates." Once the militants have had time to regroup, Zeb said, "the effects in one or two years will be worse than anything we have seen yet." He doubted that a peace deal could effectively be enforced with militants who are "splintered and scattered." He pointed out that even if the government negotiated a deal with Baitullah Mehsud, other groups would not be bound by the agreement. Zeb cited the May 18 suicide bombing in Mardan's military cantonment as evidence that "militant leadership is not unified."

Comment

¶12. (C) Although negotiations with South Waziristan tribal leaders are ongoing, the GOP appears determined to move forward with deliverables such as road openings and troop redeployments, presumably as part of the hearts and minds campaign to which the new government appears committed. However, the concern of Peshawar-based officials that we are headed for a repeat of the failed 2006 North Waziristan Agreement is well-founded. We are particularly concerned about the ability and commitment of the tribesmen to effectively counter the extremist threat in their territory.

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End comment.
PATTERSON